
OFFICE OF GOVERNOR RONNIE MUSGROVE
INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: GOVERNOR
FROM: RILEY
SUBJECT: ETS: *MISSISSIPPI WRITES* UPDATE
DATE 4/29/03
CC: FILE

I gave you a memo at the end of March explaining that Donna Davis and I were going to meet with Donna's counterparts at ETS to discuss the possibility of implementing a pilot for the *Mississippi Writes* initiative. ETS wants Mississippi to be the model for implementation of its **Criterion** online writing program. **Criterion** is a web-based service that utilizes e-rater, ETS's automated scoring technology, to offer students real-time analysis/evaluation of their writing skills. **Criterion** detects errors in grammar, mechanics, and usage. It also offers teachers the ability to insert comments regarding errors. Overall, **Criterion** offers students greater opportunity to improve their skills at their own pace and makes it easier for teachers to evaluate students' work.

Donna and I met with Sharon Robinson and Don Back of ETS. Ideally, ETS would like to take **Criterion** statewide, either via a state initiative or individual schools' participation. They understand the state fiscal situation, but want to shoot for implementing a pilot program at Canton at no cost to the state or the Canton school district. ETS has selected Canton because ETS has worked with Nissan for approximately 15 years and they think this could be a great project between ETS, Nissan, our office and the Canton schools.

Ideally, if you and Nissan officials agree, we could announce this project at the May 27th event when the first car rolls off of the line. Sharon Robinson has spoken with representatives in Nissan's corporate communications division in California, as well as with Lerleen, Nissan's education liaison in Canton. She has indicated that these officials think the project has a lot of potential, especially to be announced on May 27th.

Donna, Sharon and Don also met with Dr. Johnson and Mr. Reuben Myers, Superintendent of the Canton Schools. Dr. Johnson expressed great interest in the program, but has his staff reviewing it. Mr. Myers expressed interest, but requested a reference person to speak to in Knox County, TN, which is a strong user of **Criterion**. Donna reported that it appears as if Mr. Myers doesn't want a product pushed into the schools if the district doesn't have the resources to support it. Donna thinks that Myers is supportive, but that he might not foresee the same timeline as ETS and our office anticipate. ETS says Canton has more than ample technological capacity for **Criterion**. ETS is committed to providing the appropriate training to faculty and support staff in the

district. ETS has provided support materials and temporary passwords to both MDE and Canton staff for their review of **Criterion**.

I need your approval for next steps, the first of which is your approval of this partnership being announced at the May 27th “first car off of the line” event, as this will drive the timeframe for the other next steps. Is this a partnership (Nissan, our office and the Canton schools) that you would like announced on May 27th?

Yes – announce 5/27 _____ No – announce at later date _____

If you approve of this partnership being announced on May 27, I will then contact the following to convey our support for the announcement of the pilot program:

Sharon Robinson/Donna Davis with ETS
Sherry Vance at MDE
Tracey Woodard and/or Lerleen at Nissan
Dr. Johnson
Mr. Myers